3:Wallace & Hoebel E-4, 5 (1933,1945)1952
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Men also killed their wives at times when they suffered chronic ailments and medicine cures had failed. A case is reported of a chief who cut the throat of his wife, who had been ill for a long time, to avoid the inconvenience of caring for her. After making "medicine of preparation" to fit her for a happy reception in the land of spirits, he took her life, though mourning her untimely death. Such deeds were rare, however.

In spite of the legal right of a husband to kill his wife, a man who killed his wives too recklessly was considered "mean" by the people. Yet, if he were insensitive to such disapproval, and particularly if he were brave enough to maintain his status through coups, there was little to stop him, except that new wives became more difficult to get. On the other hand, attempts of wives on the lives of husbands were rare indeed.

Of acts taking on a criminal tinge there was only one category—excessive sorcery. Among other Plains tribes violation of the communal buffalo-hunt rules, i.e., going out to hunt alone or beating the signal for the mass charge, was one of the most severe public offenses. The military society police in charge of the hunts were wont to handle any such miscreant roughly. But the Comanches were the great exception.

Ralph Linton has suggested that a superabundance of bison on the Southern Plains made formal police sanctions functionally unnecessary for the Comanches; however, the historical evidence cited earlier indicates that food was not always easy to come by. However this may be, it is quite evident that the Comanches felt no need to make a crime of violation of the rules of the communal hunt. Furthermore, unlike the other Plains tribes, who felt the need and also had an admirably suited mechanism at hand for fulfillment of the need, the Comanches with their Shoshonean background possessed no military societies. They let the matter ride.

Sorcery that got out of hand was another matter. The Comanches were only slightly plagued by witchcraft. As Ruth Benedict once observed, "Sorcery is a fear-projection, and the Comanches were not ridden by fear."[20] Ralph Linton has emphatically reiterated that only old men, who could no longer compete on a warrior basis, turned to

[20] In conversation with Hoebel.